

CINEMA

The Spies Who Came into the Fold

Movie moguls have long sought the perfect pop-art hero, the infallible magnetic moneymaker with equal pull for kids under twelve and adolescents up to and beyond retirement age. Tarzan, a perennial favorite, still takes to the trees occasionally to fight for right, but with obsolete weapons. The Wild West gun-fighter endures, though an hombre who traditionally hates kissin' and gets his kicks by digging spurs into horseflesh seems equally ill-adapted to the times. The exquisitely contemporary hero is girl-happy, gadget-minded James Bond, whose legend has already tempted a host of imitators to bland larceny. Now five new spy spoofs reverently ape Bond, with more a-making to catch the rich financial fallout from *Goldfinger* and *Thunderball*.

Naked Naiads. The biggest, noisiest and naughtiest contender in the new spystakes is *The Silencers*, with Crooner Dean Martin playing Matt Helm, a secret agent for ICE (Intelligence Counter Espionage). Its plot pits Helm against the mastermind of one of those atomic conspiracies, headquartered in what appears to be a sunken carrier under the desert near Alamogordo. But the real contest is between nudity and gadgetry. The striptease fun, with Cyd Charisse as team captain, begins during the opening credits, then gets right down to business in Martin's circular bed, which turns, travels, tilts, finally plunges him naked into a swimming pool with a naiad identified as Lovey Kravezit. While the camera plays anatomical peekaboo, they are dried on two cylindrical Freudian symbols, then dressed and breakfasted by machine.

Innuendo roars through *Silencers*,



CYD CHARISSE IN "SILENCERS"
Captain of the anatomical team.



CROWLEY & VAUGHN IN "TRAP"
Ellery Queen for a day.

with nothing omitted save scrawling feathery pictures on the screen. Now and then, Martin sleepily warbles a song parody, his way of adding sauce to all the gleeful violence, drunken driving and self-conscious smut. Chief compensation over the long haul is Stella Stevens' zany, refreshing performance as a tourist who flees a conducted bus tour and plunges into escapades with the resolute air of a girl making every minute of her vacation count.

Keeping Clean. Intelligence men's intrigues wash cleaner in *To Trap a Spy* and *The Spy with My Face*. Originally designed for home use, these television retreads are expanded versions of two episodes from MGM's *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* series (the seams still show). In *Face*, Napoleon Solo (Robert Vaughn) seduces Thrush Agent Senta Berger somewhat more explicitly than he could before, when he had to take time out for commercials. In *Trap*, Luciana Paluzzi adds sex appeal until gunfire spoils her game, but the story really concerns an ordinary housewife (Patricia Crowley) who helps Solo foil an assassination plot. A kind of Ellery Queen for a Day, she goes home with an armful of presents, having scored a clear win for small-screen morality.

The man least likely to threaten Bond's supremacy is *That Man in Istanbul*, with Horst Buchholz battling a one-armed villain atop a minaret and performing other improbable feats to rescue a kidnapped scientist. A masquerade in a Turkish bath, long visits with FBI Sexpot Sylva Koscina and a tour of the city cannot save *Istanbul*. Delivering insouciant asides to the audience brings out the unseasoned ham in Horst.

Another elusive scientist is the excuse given for *The 2nd Best Secret Agent in the Whole Wide World*, the most flagrantly imitative spoof of the lot. Its second-best agent is played with studied respect by one Tom Adams, who vaguely resembles Sean Connery. The

film sputters with genuine excitement in the scramble for Regrav, a secret process for reversing the law of gravity. But the laws of levity begin to go topsyturvy as well in *Agent's* craven acts of homage to its prototype. 'Curling under Adams' sheets, one pussycat purrs: "I met someone like you in Florida. Called himself James . . . James Something." If the bogus Bonds abhor originality, they should at least show enough professional savvy to cover their tracks.

Mechanical Sin. The least that this spate of spies signifies, it would seem, is that ventures into vengery, sadism and furious action have set an eyebrow-raising new standard for family entertainment. Kids adore the lethal, shiny toy collection. Dads happily ogle a prepotent he-man, king of a computerized wonderland in which every foe can be swiftly vanquished, every voluptuous siren bedded. And women seem quite susceptible to the fantasy of being vicariously mauled by a master of the art, perhaps after flooring him with a karate wrist chop. Slapdash, comic-strip plots, more violent than suspenseful, are made into a joke that viewers are invited to share while soaking up the sin and splendor of strange locales, gawking at new feats of technology. The sin is mechanical—a series of clashes between the hostile male and deadly female, cold sensuality suggesting some futuristic brand of electric sex.

The bizarre, decadent world of the superspy naturally inspires a certain amount of earnest speculation. The Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, denounces Bondomania as "a dangerous mixture of violence, vulgarity, sadism and sex," though permissive Dr. Joseph Fletcher, author of *Situation Ethics* (TIME, Jan. 21), sees it as "healthy fantasizing and myth-making." Dr. Harold Lief of Tulane's Department of Psychiatry thinks Bond's Playboy philosophy may reflect society's changing values and the shape of things to come—"another manifestation of the trend toward greater female aggressiveness, the separation of love and sex."

Though the surreal James Bond would probably stand up and jeer at such criticism, he might agree with pundits who reason that, in an anxiety-ridden age, it is more fun to laugh at Spectre, Thrush, and ZOWIE than to ponder the threats posed by Mao Tse-tung. The Bondsmen seem far too giddy a crew to inflict any permanent injury on young or old, male or female. As art, the spy spoofs have little value, and they lack even true satirical purpose, or what Critic G. K. Chesterton in *A Defence of Nonsense* called "a kind of exuberant capering round a discovered truth." A craze occurs when an acquired taste unaccountably becomes an addiction. Without ever believing in it, audiences find the spoofery easy to swallow. But mock espionage may be hard put to survive a throng of second-string undercover men who seem badly in need of vocational guidance.

~~Soc 4-01.4 The Silences~~
~~Soc 4-01.4 So Trap a Spy~~
~~Soc 4-01.4 Spy with my face~~
~~Soc 4-01.4 That man in Istanbul~~
~~Soc 4-01.4 The Second Best Agent in the Whole Wide World~~